

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is requested in view of the above amendments and in light of the following remarks and discussion.

Claims 1-7, 9-11, and 23 are pending. Claim 1 is amended to address an informality noted in the outstanding Office Action. Support for the amendment to Claim 1 is self-evident. Claims 8, 19, 24, and 26 were canceled previously. Claims 12-18, 20-22, and 25 are canceled by the present amendment. No new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claim 1 and the claims depending therefrom were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as indefinite for reciting “insert gas” rather than “inert gas”. Claims 12, 18, 20-22, and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Flanigan et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,081,414, herein “Flanigan”) in view of Ohmi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,217,633, herein “Ohmi”). Claim 13 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Flanigan, Ohmi, and Watanabe et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,625,526, herein “Watanabe”). Claims 14, 15, and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Flanigan, Ohme, and Nagasaki (U.S. Patent No. 6,215,643). Claim 17 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Flanigan, Ohme, Nagasaki, and Paschen (F. Paschen Published Paper (WIED. Ann., 37, 69, 1889). Claims 1-7, 9-11, and 23 were indicated as reciting allowable subject matter.

Applicants note with appreciation the indication that Claims 1-7, 9-11, and 23 recite allowable subject matter. In view of the indication of allowable subject matter, Claim 1 is amended to address the informality noted in the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, and all the claims other than Claims 1-7, 9-11, and 23 are canceled. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claim 1 as indefinite for reciting “insert gas” rather than “inert gas” is overcome. Additionally, the rejections based on Flanigan,

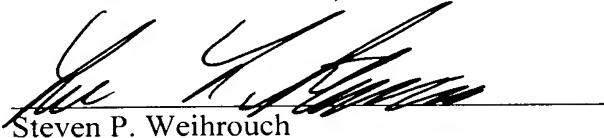
Ohme, Watanabe, Nagasaki, and Paschen are negated inasmuch as any claims rejected over any of the combinations of these references are canceled.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 1-7, 9-11, and 23 is earnestly solicited.

Should Examiner Dahimene deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, Examiner Dahimene is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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